

TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
Minutes of April 28, 2015

- I. ROLL CALL.** Chair John Quinn III, Selectmen Lynn Doney, Matthew Gadbois, Kenneth W. Goslant, and K. David Maxwell (absent). Also present were Town Manager Jeffrey Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Zoning Administrator Michele Braun, and Kathleen Lott (*Northfield News*).

Prior to the regular meeting, the Town Select Board held a Public Hearing beginning at 7:00 p.m. regarding a proposed grant application. The Notice of Public Hearing is as follows:

The Town of Northfield is considering making application to the State of Vermont for a Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Implementation Grant under the Vermont Community Development Program. A public hearing will be held in the Community Room located in the Brown Public Library (93 South Main Street) on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at 7:00 pm to obtain the views of citizens on community development, to furnish information concerning the amount of funds available and the range of community development activities that may be undertaken under this program, the impact to any historic and archaeological resources that may be affected by the proposed project, and to give affected citizens the opportunity to examine the proposed statement of projected use of these funds. The proposal is to apply \$300,000 in CDBG-DR Funds, which will be used to accomplish the following activities. There are seven (7) contiguous properties on a five (5) acre parcel between the Dog River and Water Street. This area will be subject to FEMA's standard deed restrictions, plus a conservation easement held by VHCB. The Friends of the Winooski River have hired Milone & MacBroom to conduct a hydraulic and hydrologic study to design up to four (4) alternatives for ecological restoration and enhanced floodplain function in the adjacent river system. Construction of the chosen alternative will be the first phase of site redevelopment in 2016. One outcome of this phase of the project will be a reduction of flood risk to the adjacent neighborhood. The Vermont Downtown Action Team held a placemaking workshop in 2014, in which Town officials, Water Street neighbors, representatives of FWR and VHCB, geologists from Norwich University, and others worked with landscape architects to produce a conceptual design for the park. This plan includes floodable recreational amenities close to the street, such as volleyball courts, picnic tables, an organic playscape, and a series of intersecting circular walking paths with landscaping. The Town intends to work with the neighborhood and other stakeholders to ensure the final design meets residents' needs and vision of a desirable downtown riverfront park, as well as ensuring compliance with flood hazard regulations.

Chair Quinn began the Public Hearing by asking Zoning Administrator Michele Braun about the status of the grant application, which needs to be submitted no later than next Monday (05/04/15). Ms. Braun stated that the application is nearly complete. Although the application will ask for up to \$300,000, she believes that the actual project costs should be closer to \$200,000. If the application is successful, hired consultants will begin by looking at what can be done to reduce the threat of future flooding to the Water Street neighborhood. The Friends of the Winooski River (FWR) has received a grant for computer simulations that indicated what would happen should certain actions be taken. One possible action would be to open up the riverbank alongside the municipal property located on Water Street between Wall Street and the footbridge. This would have the effect of reducing the flood level by around two and a half feet (2½'). A berm located in the river by this location would be removed. It was originally installed as a counter-flood measure but actually has had the opposite effect. The FWR then would perform riverbank restoration.

Selectman Goslant asked why the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources can encourage purchasing and demolishing homes after a flood event but is so reluctant to allow municipalities to perform basic riverbed maintenance to prevent flooding in the first place. Ms. Braun stated that work in the riverbed is only effective if it is performed the entire length of the river from its source to its outlet. Otherwise, a municipality doing work on its section of river would only push problems into the next community.

Selectman Goslant believes that this is a lot of money to put into one location when another flood could just wash away all the work done. Ms. Braun stated that all work in the floodplain, as well as the riverbank restoration, would be designed to survive a future flood event. The subsequent landscaping of the area, including the creation of walking paths, also would be designed to be flood-resistant by employing such materials as "permeable concrete."

Selectman Gadbois asked if neighborhood residents might see reductions in their flood insurance costs should these flood-prevention actions be taken. Ms. Braun said this was a possibility. She added that another result would be to make the neighborhood more sustainable, which would make it easier for homeowners to sell at a future time. The project engineers would address the Select Board and present various options once they have reviewed the situation. Ms. Braun added that there is no guarantee that the grant application will be successful or fully funded. There are state funds remaining from the immediate post-Irene era but these monies are quickly disappearing.

Selectman Doney asked if any project costs would be charged to the Town. Ms. Braun stated that the grant would include a ten percent (10%) local match amount but there are other funding options that could be used to meet this obligation, such as donated materials, items provided by the Northfield-Roxbury Long-Term Recovery Committee, etc.

There being no other questions or comments, the Public Hearing closed at 7:27 p.m. The regular meeting began immediately.

II. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Board members and the public were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. **SET/ADJUST AGENDA.** Chair Quinn would like to add to the agenda the Select Board's formal authorization for the grant application discussed during the Public Hearing. This may not be necessary but he does not want to take any chances. There were no objections.

IV. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.

V. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- a. **April 14, 2015 (Regular Meeting).** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve the minutes. **Motion passed 3-0-1, with Selectman Gadbois abstaining.**

VI. **APPROVAL OF BILLS**

- a. **Warrant #21-15.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Doney, to approve Warrant #21-15 in the amount of \$231,244.80. Selectman Doney inquired about a \$2,162.52 payment to DuBois & King for Village Common Rehabilitation Project engineering services. Manager Schulz stated that this was the final payment for this project and covered the cost of re-engineering the "bulb out" at the northeast corner of Depot Square after it was discovered that flatbed trucks could not negotiate the turn. Chair Quinn does not believe that the municipality should be held responsible for this extra expense because Town and Village officials had raised concerns about this with the project engineers before construction began. The engineers had assured them at the time that trucks would have adequate clearance. Chair Quinn felt that the Town should not now be held responsible for this miscalculation. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to amend the original motion by reducing the warrant by \$2,162.52 for a new total amount of \$229,082.28. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

Selectman Goslant believes the Town is being charged too much for expenses related to the backhoe, which is shared by the Highway Department and the Water/Sewer Department. Since the Water/Sewer employees have almost exclusive use of the backhoe most of the year, the bulk of repair expenses, etc. should be charged to ratepayers and not taxpayers. Selectman Goslant also felt that the Highway Department is paying a great deal to have its own sweeper and was not sure if this was a justifiable expense. He then questioned a payment for lumber to repair the ball field bleachers; since the Northfield High School uses this field for its league games about ninety-eight percent (98%) of the time, why isn't the school paying for some of this? Manager Schulz is aware of this concern and is looking to schedule a meeting with school officials to discuss this matter.

Chair Quinn asked about a \$756.20 bill to repair the bathroom at the Town Garage. Manager Schulz stated that a broken pipe and reducer had to be replaced. Selectman Gadbois added that the repair affected the entire building, not just the bathroom. **Motion to approve revised warrant passed 4-0-0.**

- b. **Approval of Bi-Weekly Payroll through April 12, 2015.** Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to approve the bi-weekly payroll in the amount of \$80,149.64. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VII. LIQUOR CONTROL COMMISSION

- a. **Liquor License Renewal Applications**
 - 1. **Knotty Shamrock (Inside and Outside Consumption).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
 - 2. **Northfield Country Club (Outside Consumption).** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
 - 3. **Woods at Wihakowi.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve the liquor license renewal. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

VIII. SELECT BOARD

- a. **Renewal of Village Center Designation.** Manager Schulz said the State of Vermont has requested that Northfield renew its Village Center Designation. This status was granted in 2010 and is only good for five (5) years. The Village Center boundaries have not changed. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to approve and authorize the designation renewal. Selectman Gadbois asked why the boundary cannot be expanded slightly to include the Senior Center, etc. Ms. Braun said that the State of Vermont has very strict guidelines regarding what can and cannot be included in a designated Village Center. If you look at other such areas in Vermont, you would see that they usually are quite limited in size. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- b. **Authorization of CDBG-DR Grant Application.** Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to authorize Manager Schulz and Zoning Administrator Braun to go forward on the grant application that was discussed earlier tonight during the warned Public Hearing. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**
- c. **Agreement to Join Mountain Alliance (formerly Tri-Town Alliance).** Manager Schulz spoke to Randolph Town Manager Mel Adams regarding some minor changes he would like made to the Inter-Municipal Agreement that Northfield would have to sign before joining the Alliance. Since the agreement cannot be formally approved until these revisions are agreed upon, Manager Schulz is looking for additional feedback from the Select Board at this time. He did learn that the administrative costs for Northfield to be an Alliance member would be about \$1000 per year and that the cost of holding an annual Household Hazardous Waste Collection here would be about \$9,000 to \$10,000. Manager Schulz believes that the agreement should be finalized and ready for adoption at the next regular meeting (05/12/15). Kathleen Lott asked if a public vote would be required before Northfield joins the Alliance. Manager Schulz has been looking into this matter and his conclusion so far is that joining an existing solid waste management district does not require a public vote. He will do additional research and confirm this.
- d. **Fairground Road Bridge State Grant.** Manager Schulz stated that this matter was put on the agenda last week because the Vermont Agency of Transportation (AOT) informed him that the current AOT grant for this project needed to be closed out and a new one authorized. However, he subsequently was contacted by AOT and told that the old grant could be extended so no action is required at this time. Manager Schulz added that construction on the project restarted recently after the winter shutdown and looks to be on schedule for completion in June 2015.
- e. **Economic Development Committee Meeting.** The Committee will hold its next meeting tomorrow night (04/29/15) at 6:00 p.m. in the Municipal Building.

IX. BOARD MEMBERS' COMMENTS, CONCERNS, QUESTIONS

- a. **Northfield Savings Bank (NSB).** Chair Quinn reported that he, Manager Schulz, and Zoning Administrator Braun met with NSB officials last week to discuss their timetable for moving their corporate headquarters to their new facility in Berlin. Once the building is finished next month, NSB will be moving personnel over in phases and will provide the municipality with periodic updates. There are plans to update the customer service areas of their Northfield facility once its transition to a branch office is complete.
- b. **Demolition of Trailer on FEMA Buyout Property.** Selectman Goslant noted that the abandoned trailer on the Union Street property recently had been demolished. He asked why a local company did not get the work. Manager Schulz stated that Zoning Administrator Braun advertised a RFP in the *Times Argus* and the low bidder was hired.
- c. **Northfield Utility Commissions Update.** Manager Schulz stated that the Utility Commissions met again last night to discuss the proposed FY 2015/2016 budgets for the Electric, Water, and Sewer Departments. The plan is for the commissions to complete their review of the budgets before the end of May and present the finalized budgets for Select Board approval in June. Selectman Goslant serves as the Select Board's representative on the Electric Utility Commission and confirmed that generating utility budgets is a very difficult task. He commended fellow commissioner Stephen Fitzhugh for his ability to explain power purchases and other complex utility matters. As discussed earlier, Selectman Goslant remains concerned about how the use of the backhoe is billed out. Chair Quinn agreed that the costs of maintaining the backhoe should be allocated based on actual use. This matter should be discussed and resolved when the FY 2016/2017 budgets are developed. He also suggested that in future, the Water and Sewer Department budgets should be approved at the same time as the Town General and Highway budgets. This would not be possible for the Electric Department budget since periodic fluxes in power costs means its budget cannot be adopted too far in advance.
- d. **Green Up Day.** Chair Quinn reported that Green Up Day will be this coming Saturday (05/02/15). Those who wish to volunteer should meet behind the Northfield Fire Station (128 Wall Street) at 9:00 a.m.

X. TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT. Manager Schulz had nothing to add to his written report.

XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to go into executive session, in accordance with 1 VSA 313 (a)(1) in order to discuss a personnel and legal issue with Manager Schulz present. **Motion passed 4-0-0.**

The Board went into executive session at 8:25 p.m.

Motion by Selectman Goslant, seconded by Selectman Gadbois, to come out of executive session.
Motion passed 4-0-0.

The Board came out of executive session at 8:50 p.m. No action was taken.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT. Motion by Selectman Gadbois, seconded by Selectman Goslant, to adjourn.
Motion passed 4-0-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth L. McCann

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the regular Select Board meeting of May 12, 2015.